

Half a century ago, it was a Soviet foreign minister who wisely warned the world that peace was indivisible. To our sorrow, we have learned that his warning was well founded. Has the world changed? Indeed, it has become much smaller to the extent that it is even less possible today than before for any responsible nation to act according to one set of standards in one situation and a different set of standards when that seems expedient.

The building of confidence is a continuous process: it permits no interruptions. And détente is indivisible: it cannot be made to flourish in one area of the globe while it is being flouted in another.

It is with profound regret that we must acknowledge that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has contributed to an erosion of a sense of international confidence and to calling into question the whole concept of détente which depends on confidence for its effective pursuit.

As long as present circumstances exist, the Canadian Government cannot but be deeply concerned about the way in which the international climate is being affected.

Our concerns exist on a number of levels.

In the first place, the Soviet invasion has had a deeply corrosive effect on the interests of the entire international community. Prospects for the early implementation of important measures of arms limitation which all members of the United Nations were eagerly awaiting have dimmed. The invasion has also cast in doubt the Soviet commitment to manifestations of détente as a meaningful policy rather than a high sounding word.

Secondly, the Soviet invasion has exacerbated an already complex and difficult regional security situation, and apart from doing a grave disservice to the interests of world peace, this surely constitutes a major threat to the nations and the people of the region. Tensions have mounted, uncertainties have multiplied and the potential for further instability has increased. Above all, the path of economic development will be interrupted and the human consequences of this are hard to measure. It is not so difficult however to forecast the tragedy that is being played out and undoubtedly will continue in terms of the refugee outflow. Again, as in Vietnam and Kampuchea, it is a story of lives lost, families separated and hardship endured. We can only ask: in whose interests?